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SUBJECT: EMERGENCY ACTION COMMITTEE (EAC) MEETING - MANAGUA

REF: Managua 1382

¶1. (SBU) AmEmb Managua's EAC convened on 11/17/2008 to discuss recent events surrounding the municipal elections that were held on 11/9/2008. Members in attendance were AMB (Chair), DCM, RSO, POL, ECON, ORA, DAO, MILGRP, DEA, PAO, MGT, CONS, IMO, HU, GSO, and USAID.

¶2. (SBU) The following subjects were discussed:

- Post election civil unrest/violence.

The EAC discussed actions by the FSLN, the opposition, and the Nicaraguan National Police response (or lack thereof) following municipal elections that took place across Nicaragua on November 9, ¶2008. As reported in Reftel, violent demonstrations followed and numerous injuries were reported.

On Sunday, November 16, 2008, opposition groups had planned a march in the city of Leon but were largely blocked from attending by supporters of the FSLN. FSLN managed to block the road to Leon prior to most opposition members arriving. Civil unrest which included violence in Leon was widely reported in the media. Police were largely ineffective in controlling the situation and did little to re-open the road.

In anticipation of a planned march on Tuesday, November 18, 2008, FSLN groups have taken to the streets. FSLN groups first blocked kilometer 12.5 of Carretera Sur (South Highway) to prohibit opposition leaders from meeting. Their roadblock of Carretera Sur later moved to kilometer 8.5. Several direct-hire American personnel live in this direction and cannot go home for lack of another route as of the writing of this cable. Note: Carretera Sur is part of the Pan American highway.

Numerous other members of the FSLN have also blocked other main routes which impact direct-hire American personnel. The Galerias Mall area and the nearby Jean Paul Genie traffic circle have been occupied by FSLN. A main difference from previous protests in this area is that the RSO office received reports that FSLN members were targeting vehicles for violence if they were believed to be driven by opposition members.

Other areas affected by FSLN include the Pista Suburbana, a main thoroughfare for inner-city traffic and the Metrocentro Mall/Hotel complex which has been the main focal point of FSLN and opposition gatherings due to it's proximity to the Nicaraguan Supreme Electoral Council.

The situation remains fluid. Street protests and clashes are likely to continue.

Activities observed during protests include, but are not limited to tear gas, rubber bullets, setting off fireworks, rock-throwing, tire burning, road blocks, bus/vehicle burning and some degree of physical violence between law enforcement and protestors or between rival political parties or individuals. Activities tend to intensify in violence beginning in the early afternoon. Passersby and observers are not immune from the effects of these protests.

Mission members and American citizens were reminded that even events intended to be peaceful could turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. Mission members and American citizens were urged to avoid the affected areas if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any large gathering.

- Post's Emergency Notification Systems (PENS).

Post's emergency notification systems have been used regularly during recent demonstrations and have proven reliable. Post's PENS system includes both the E&E radio network and a telephone cascade system.

As reported in Reftel, while radio notifications have been largely successful, numerous Mission members reported problems with the E&E radio alert portion. Due to limited radio repeater coverage, some Mission members did not get the alert and have sporadic coverage with Post 1. The EAC requested that Post's IMO request additional funding to expand radio repeater coverage.

- PAS events (Cal Ripkin Jr./Denis Martinez visit).

The Cal Ripkin Jr./Dennis Martinez visit and the accompanying PAS events were accomplished without incident. The final portion which was scheduled for Leon today, November 17, 2008, was cancelled due to safety/security concerns. The members of the Cal Ripkin Jr./Dennis Martinez visit are scheduled to depart early morning on November 18, 2008.

- Continuation of the situation.

The EAC agreed that it can expect both the FSLN and the opposition groups will continue their activities into the foreseeable future. The EAC will continue to monitor developments and take action as

appropriate.

- American citizen issues.

CONS stated it would issue another Warden Message on post-election violence as well as the planned march route for November 18, 2008.

CONS will also suspend routine services that are scheduled for the afternoon of November 18, 2008.

- Security Notice.

RSO will issue another Security Notice on post-election violence as well as the planned march route for November 18, 2008.

- Tripwires.

EAC members were reminded that Post's tripwires are current and available in the Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Note: The EAP was updated in the Crisis Emergency Planning Application in May 2008 and contact lists were updated following the summer turnover of personnel.

It was agreed that agency/section heads would continue to have wide discretion in granting liberal leave during this time of civil unrest.

Mission members were reminded of the need to reduce unnecessary classified holdings.

EAC members were reminded of the location of the alternate command center which is located at the Ambassador's residence.

EAC members were reminded that they should begin to consider how they would best implement extended hours of operations should it be necessary to do so.

EAC members agreed that the Embassy would be open for business on Tuesday, November 18, 2008 but members should monitor developments to determine if that decision should change.

- TDY and other visitors.

EAC members agreed that at the current time, TDY and other visitors could continue to come to Post providing their intended purpose could be accomplished given current local conditions. It was agreed that non-essential trips that could be postponed should be postponed until things settle down.

- School security.

The RSO briefed that the American Nicaraguan School (ANS) which has been most affected by the situation due to its location has been in close contact with the office on the situation. The ANS is the school attended by most Mission children and other American citizens.

The ANS originally scheduled a short day in anticipation of the planned march on November 18, 2008 but subsequently cancelled school for the day following the commencement of unrest.

13. (U) Additional information will be reported as it is developed. POC is RSO Chris Rooks, 011-505-252-7694 or via unclassified e-mail at RooksCR@state.gov.

CALLAHAN